



Connecticut Students for a Dream

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Testimony to the Human Services of the Connecticut General Assembly

February 14, 2023

Testimony Regarding HB 6616: “An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status”

Dear Members and Honorable Chairs of the Human Services of Connecticut General Assembly:

We, Connecticut Students for a Dream (C4D), stand in support of HB 6616: “An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status”

C4D is a statewide, youth-led network that fights for the rights of undocumented immigrant youth and their families. We do this through community organizing, leadership development, and advocacy. We are proud to be the only organization in Connecticut that is led by and for immigrant youth directly impacted by the issues we seek to address. Our membership is composed of undocumented immigrant youth ages 13-24 throughout the state of Connecticut.

CT Students for a Dream and our membership supports HB6616: passing this bill is the right thing to do as all youth need access to healthcare to lead healthy lives. The majority of our members are under the age of 26 and don't have healthcare because of their immigration status. This bill would make a huge impact in our members' lives. If this bill passes, our members would directly benefit and would be able to access the healthcare they need.

We especially want to highlight that many of our members are between the ages of 18 and 26, many of whom are speaking today. They are transitioning out of high school to the rest of their lives as young adults. Access to stable healthcare would allow them to access the healthcare services they need to lead healthy lives. And in turn it would set them up for a healthier adulthood.

Expanding up to age 26 will provide health care to a wide variety of persons: young parents, workers, students. There is a reason why a key part of the ACA includes instituting a policy that individuals up to age 26 can stay in their parent's health plan. If Connecticut wants to work towards a thriving, growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of our future, Connecticut must ensure that these individuals have access to health coverage

Over the last 2 years, the CT General Assembly has made great progress in expanding access to HUSKY for undocumented immigrant children under 12 years old and pre and postnatal care for undocumented immigrant pregnant women. HB6616 builds on that and ensures that all young adults would be able to access and keep their healthcare until they turn 26.

However, in the long term, we need ALL of our immigrant community to have access to healthcare. Connecticut's work cannot end with expanding access up to age 26; we need to open access to HUSKY to immigrants of any age, including to all parents, adults, and elderly folks.. The state of Connecticut must create a long term plan to expand HUSKY access to our whole immigrant community.

If we want healthy young people, the best way to achieve that is to have healthy parents - but currently, we're leaving most undocumented parents behind. These are our member's parents and families, we see everyday how the lack of healthcare access impacts them and their lives. If CT wants to ensure immigrant young people have access to care and are healthy, we need the adults in their lives to have health coverage too.

Young people do better when their parents do better. Research has proven that when parents and caregivers have access to health care, their children are more likely to be insured and to use and receive care. We have seen that in other state that expanded coverage¹. This is because when parents have healthcare coverage, they are more likely to understand how to make use of healthcare coverage for their whole family.

Connecticut can't afford not to expand access to HUSKY to our immigrant community. Individuals with no health insurance still need and use healthcare, and the cost of their care adds up and gets passed on to hospitals and our state. Recent research by RAND² shows that expanding HUSKY to all immigrants regardless of status would result in \$63.3 million in savings to hospitals from reduced uncompensated care costs. Additionally, the state of Connecticut could save \$15 million in emergency Medicaid program costs.

As we look to Connecticut's future, we cannot afford to sit idly by and do nothing about the lack of access to affordable healthcare. Today, this Committee can send a bold message that our state and its legislators believe in equality for Connecticut residents regardless of immigration status, and are committed to seeing Connecticut residents healthy and thriving.

C4D and our membership views this bill as an essential step in ensuring that all CT's immigrants can have an equal opportunity to access affordable health insurance. We strongly stand in support of HB6616 and urge the Committee to vote favorably and ensure that this legislation becomes reality.

On behalf of the C4D Community,

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¹ Venkataramani M, Pollack CE, Roberts ET. Spillover Effects of Adult Medicaid Expansions on Children's Use of Preventive Services. *Pediatrics*. 2017 Dec;140(6):e20170953. doi: 10.1542/peds.2017-0953. Epub 2017 Nov 13. PMID: 29133576.

² https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1964-1.html